

OBSERVING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IN BRITAIN

Matt Zimmerman, a Treynor graduate, is a senior at Central College majoring in marketing and communication. Last summer he participated in the Central College study abroad program by traveling to London to work as an intern in the Parliament of Great Britain. Zimmerman said he worked for a Member of Parliament (MP) with senior rank in the Conservative Tory political party who represented the Cotswold district. The MP supervised Zimmerman, gave him work tasks, and introduced him to other members of parliament and to ambassadors of other countries. Zimmerman said it was a fantastic experience that changed his perspective about people and politics. He noted there are differences between the British legislature and the U.S. legislature. There are three political parties representing the British citizens, Zimmerman noted. They are the Conservative Tory, Liberal Democrat, and Labor Party, and this results in vocal debate and government action through compromise. Zimmerman observed that this fast paced legislative action is much different compared to the U. S. Zimmerman stated he gained valuable experience of working as a professional although he was in an unpaid intern position. He organized daily portfolios for his supervising MP on current events and breaking news. He answered letters from the constituency in Cotswold who wrote their representative to seek solutions to local problems when they couldn't get local action. Zimmerman said he also performed information research for parliamentary debates, and was surprised to find the debates were planned and scripted. He noted that immigration and worker compensation issues were major subjects of debate in parliament this summer. Zimmerman stated the most difficult thing to do was to follow the cultural standards of etiquette and keep titles of individuals straight when addressing them. Zimmerman said he was one of seventeen parliamentary interns, three from Central College and the remainder from various U.S. locations. After graduation this year he is planning to find work in the local region, get married, and maybe become active in U.S. politics.